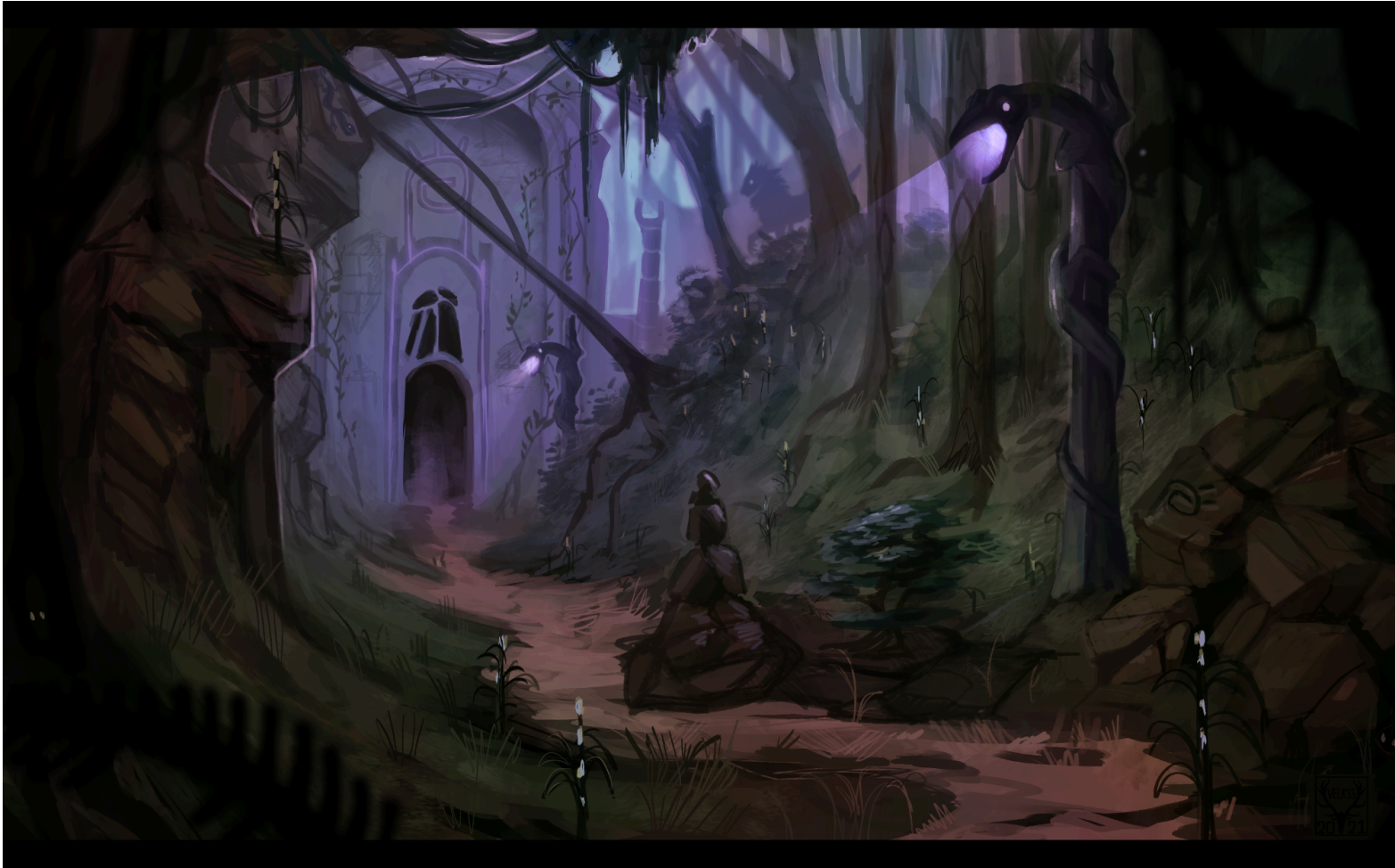


The islands, an Ethora map zoom-in



Featured point of interest:

Ghost of the Syr ruins



The Syr ruins are located near the mountains south of Highwind. A

Dark mysterious forest densely populated by all kinds of creatures.

Rumors are these ruins belonged to a highly religious tribe hundreds of years ago, and have since been looked after by descendants of this old tribe. A single soul remains true to their beliefs, and regularly maintains the ruins of this leftover temple. The god of this temple is often portrayed as a winged Arcanus, glowing a purple hue. The story goes, this deity showed up one day and protected the tribe from asteroids falling from the sky. The one Arcanus taking care of these ruins is called Aerin, often referred to as **The ghost of the Syr ruins**. They are rarely seen, and their unique appearance because of their albino mutation often ends up with people thinking they are a ghost. They appear frail and are quite small, but don't be fooled... They are quite capable of surviving on their own, even in a place like this.



Highwind

Of anywhere on the islands, Highwind is most likely the safest to live. Safety is still a relative term here. However, there are measures in place that offer some reprieve from constant threat and struggle. The city is relatively large and heavily fortified with towering walls, foreboding gates, and a militia to keep a sense of order. Inside, one will find the usual kinds of vendors selling small wares they have crafted or found. There are places in which to buy or barter for things like food and textiles. Taverns and the like are popular at all hours of the day, but thrive at night, drawing any and all

types inside whether smugglers, thieves, or those simply trying to survive after escaping from something worse.

The community here is one of survivors. The Islands are not exactly kind to anyone, and it shows. Every Arcanus that chooses to live here bear physical evidence of their respective trials in life. Scars. Torn ears. Missing digits. Body parts that don't look like they belong. All of it is part of the "normal". It's generally a good idea to be cautious around others. Everyone here has a story they don't like to tell, and it taught most to be conservative with forming any kind of alliance, friendship or relationship, but it's not unheard of. Generally, most interactions are civil. Polite, even, but the threat of violence is always looming. Tensions tend to run a bit high, making brawls in the streets common enough to ignore unless excessively violent, and this is where the militia would step in. Despite all of that, it's very possible to live and thrive here if one is intelligent and has the fortitude.



Farbury

Farbury lies at the northern end of the largest island, bracketed by mountains on either side and situated near the ocean. Being so far north means that even in the height of summer, snow clings to the ground. Most crops have to be bought or bartered for in Highwind, smuggled in, or foraged for further south. The winters are harsh, making most huddle in their homes and only venturing out for essential things such as hunting. Life here is not for the faint of heart, which can be said about the islands in general. Yet, even here, one can carve out a small, relatively peaceful

existence. Farbury seems to exude the old adage of "where there's a will, there's a way".

The population here is small, but more close-knit than other settlements and communities that are scattered about. With the terrain and climate as it is, the denizens of Farbury rely mostly on fishing and other gifts from the sea. They make use of everything they can find. Even large animal bones can be made into art to sell elsewhere in the way of scrimshaw. Here, Arcanus are more tolerant of each other and a bit quicker to trust one another, but not before one proves themselves valuable to the community. Be it some skill or purely a willingness to work hard, everyone earns their place. Without everyone pulling their weight, the community may fall apart. The threat of exile has kept that from happening thus far. In short, Farbury is isolated, situated in an unforgiving climate and far from an easy life, but the community is strong. No one is turned away, so long as they contribute.

Mirstone

The northeastern island is a lonely place. It's difficult to reach and isolated, and despite the fair size of the island, there's only a single settlement: Mirstone. This island's nearest communities are the relative safety of Highwind, and the utterly lawless Darkwell. Very few make it to this place, but those that do will find shelter in the shadow of the solitary mountain. Winds gust and howl across the plains, cold and seemingly cutting to the bone. Approaching the main gates, one can't help but feel something is off, but it seems better than staying out in the open.



Inside the city, outward appearances would have you think all is seemingly normal. The

somewhat small population appears to be made up of residents that are the kind that welcome newcomers. Friendly merchants and kind words. Yet, if one pays close enough attention, their eyes almost always hold a hint of nervousness. As if one wrong move may land them on the wrong side of someone's wrath. As if they're being watched.

The longer you stay, the more you feel uneasy. Jumpy. Anxious. Yet nothing is outwardly threatening. What can be the source of this? Is it a malevolent presence? Is it the very air? It's hard to say, but it seems that none who enter are easily able to leave. Was coming here a mistake?

Darkwell

If Highwind is somewhat of a safe haven for the island residents, Darkwell is its chaotic mirror. Lying on the easternmost island, Darkwell is a lawless citadel that thrives on crime and violence. It's as if the very walls exude a foreboding energy.

Any Arcanus that chooses to live here would most likely be corrupt if they lived on the mainland, where the Judgement Gods have reign. Any and all kinds of dark dealings happen here. Smuggling. Dark arts. Even murder. If one has dirty business to be done, this is a place to find the Arcanus that will do it for you.

There is a life to be carved out here, albeit treacherous. Trusting another in this place is nearly unheard of. Everyone is out for their own gain. The citadel has much of the same establishments as any other larger settlements, but the air is always thick with tension. The taverns don't boast any joyful tunes from traveling musicians. The merchants are shrewd and cold. Fights ending in death over small grievances are



fairly common. Any laughter heard is dripping with malice. The evidence of the harsh life here is clear on every resident or passing nomad. Scars and lost digits or limbs are nearly a bragging point. Enter this place at your own risk. There are fortunes to be made, but the risk and price are high.

Exile's End

It's no secret that the islands behind the barrier are no place for the faint of heart. It's immensely dangerous, whether from the inhabitants or the wilds themselves. Only the most desperate to escape the mainland choose to try to make it beyond the barrier. The westernmost island is home to a place feared by even other islanders: Exile's End. A schism in values and motivations paved the way for two separate

halves of a dangerous whole to coexist.

With a swath of extremely rocky terrain that made for difficult travel, a settlement sprung up on either side, turning into an eastern and a western settlement. Strangely, both sides ultimately want the same thing. They want the barrier destroyed. Here on the islands, the judgment gods don't exist. It's widely believed that bringing the barriers down would do the same for the rest of Ethora.



The eastern settlement is mainly composed of descendants of great warrior families. Almost all the residents here are avid supporters of King Hidan, or they at least respect what he once was. Despite Hidan's current state, the Arcanus here all believe that the Judgment Gods have no place in their lives, or anyone else's. They give a false sense of peace or rule them with fear. They believe that their work in bringing down the barriers would free the others on the mainland, and can only make life better.

The western settlement is a bit more... unstable. Most of the Arcanus that choose to live here are also descendants of families that came before them. These families were known for more unsavory things during the war. They ran cruel experiments and mutilated wild beasts to form them into weapons. Their actions brought about the Empurios, bringing Ethora to its current state. Those that live here now are malicious, or generally insane. The majority worship Hidan for his current state, but a small number remembers the way Hidan used to harbor a fit of deep-rooted anger towards them. These Arcanus work to use Hidan's instability to get rid of him later.

(Read deeper into Empurios, Hidan, and the Judgment Gods in the [LORE](#))